

VZCZCXYZ0010
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBW #0645/01 1880919
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 070921Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0054
INFO RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RUCXJAC/JAC MOLESWORTH JCDX RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 000645

NOFORN
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/07/07
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AL](#) [AU](#) [BK](#) [BU](#) [EZ](#) [HR](#) [IT](#) [KV](#) [LO](#) [MD](#) [MK](#) [MW](#) [PL](#)
SI, UP, SR
SUBJECT: SERBIA: REGIONAL SUMMIT TRUMPETS COOPERATION BUT YIELDS
LITTLE

CLASSIFIED BY: Deborah Mennuti, Political Chief, DOS, POL; REASON:
1.4(D)

Summary

¶1. (C) Serbia hosted over a dozen Central European presidents at a June 19-21 summit focusing on regional cooperation in the realms of energy, economics and European integration. Though hailed as a success for Serbia's regional policy, the summit yielded little beyond symbolism and rhetoric. The bilateral meetings between President Boris Tadic and his Slovenian and Croatian counterparts were the most significant signs during the summit of a continued thaw between Serbia and these two neighbors. Ongoing tensions between President Tadic and Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic were unintentionally highlighted at the summit and afterward. End Summary.

Meeting of the Presidents

¶2. (SBU) Serbia on June 19-21 hosted fourteen European leaders at the annual summit of Central European heads of state. Convening this year in the city of Novi Sad, summit participants included the presidents of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Tri-Presidency member Vladimir Radmanovic represented Bosnia-Herzegovina. Albanian President Topi cancelled his previously planned participation because the President of Kosovo was not invited to the gathering. Billed as the largest summit in Serbia since the Non-Aligned Movement days of Yugoslavia, the summit was entitled "Joint Efforts for Overcoming the Challenges of the 3 E's: Economics, Energy, and European Integration." No joint communique was issued at the conclusion of the gathering.

¶3. (SBU) President Tadic held fourteen bilateral meetings during the course of the summit, including widely-reported meetings with Slovenian President Daniel Turk and Croatian President Stejepan Mesic. A statement from the Slovenian president's office described relations between Serbia and Slovenia as "reaching a new level" as both sides discussed economic ties, Slovenia's assistance to Serbia in achieving visa liberalization, and preparations for an official visit by President Tadic to Slovenia later this year. Croatian

President Mesic said his country's foreign policy ambitions "would not be satisfied without the entrance of all countries of the region into the EU." Tadic and Mesic told reporters that they agreed to launch a process "on all levels" to end secret war crimes indictments by Croatian courts against Serbs, which had impeded Serbs from returning to Croatia to settle property claims. Tadic also accepted an invitation to visit Croatia in early September.

Belgrade Claims Foreign Policy Success

14. (SBU) Serbian officials were quick to hail the summit as a sign of Serbia's successful regional diplomacy. Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic said that the Novi Sad summit showed that Serbia's foreign policy, in all questions regarding regional policy, was conducted in a way that brought results. Jeremic added that the decision to hold the summit in Novi Sad was the result of Serbia's foreign policy and sent the joint message of essential progress on European integration for Serbia. Aleksandar Knezevic, deputy to Tadic foreign policy advisor Jovan Ratkovic, told us that the Novi Sad summit was more successful than previous regional summits and largely focused attention on regional energy cooperation as well as on migration, organized crime, and the need to continue the enlargement process. Knezevic added that the summit demonstrated Serbia's commitment to regional cooperation as one of Belgrade's top three foreign policy priorities. (Protecting Serbia's territorial integrity and European integration are Serbia's other two foreign policy priorities.)

15. (C) Others, however, questioned the significance of the Novi Sad summit. Officials from the Serbian Progressive Party (an opposition party) and the Serbian Renewal Movement (a governing coalition member) expressed similar sentiments to us that the Novi Sad summit was "just a show" and that little of substance was achieved. Other contacts suggested to us that the presence of only presidents ensured that no substantive deliverables would be achievable. Macedonian Embassy Political Counselor Aleksandar Novotni strongly objected to Serbian assertions that the summit signified success for Serbia's regional policy, telling us that the decision to hold the summit in Novi Sad was made last year prior to the formation of the current Serbian government. Credit for holding the summit in Serbia should actually go to Macedonia, which lobbied the regional presidents last year at the summit in Skopje to give Serbia a chance to host, Novotni added.

Rivalries Below the Surface

16. (C) The summit also revealed underlying rivalries in Serbia's foreign policy establishment. Our contacts told us that Tadic foreign policy advisor Ratkovic organized and was present for the entire summit, while Jeremic only attended the formal closing dinner. Knezevic indicated to us that Tadic's office was responsible for organizing the summit, suggesting that the Foreign Ministry had been sidelined. The Belgrade daily "Blic," citing an unnamed source, reported on July 1 that Tadic complained to Prime Minister Cvetkovic and Belgrade Mayor Djilas that Jeremic had not assisted at all with preparations for the Novi Sad summit but nonetheless took credit in the media for the summit's success. Snezana Miljanic, the GOS Deputy Secretary General, told us that Jeremic had been effectively sidelined from government discussions of foreign policy over the past several months because Jeremic was often traveling when the government chose to discuss foreign policy issues. Jeremic rarely spoke up at government sessions when he was

present, particularly over the past two months, Miljanic said.

Comment

¶7. (C) While Serbia's role as host of the Novi Sad summit should not be considered a triumph of Serbian foreign policy, the summit was another sign that Belgrade is taking regional cooperation seriously. With the multilateral aspects yielding no substantive accomplishments aside from pledges to deepen energy cooperation, the greatest value for Serbia came from the photo ops and bilateral meetings. This was particularly true of the Turk and Mesic meetings, which signaled progress in the thaw in Serbia's bilateral relations with Slovenia and Croatia. In stark contrast with the often confrontational approach of the MFA, the Presidency's constructive handling of the summit once again demonstrated that it deserves the credit for recent progress in regional relations. End Comment.
BRUSH